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REMARKS

FEB 12 2007

Claims 22-26 were presented for examination in the present application and remain pending upon entry of the instant response. The listing of claims is provided herewith for convenience and clarity.

Claims 23-26 have been allowed.

Applicant notes the Reasons for Allowance set forth in the Office Action. In accordance with 37 C.F.R. 1.104(e), Applicant respectfully submits that claims 23-26 of the present application are allowable for at least the reasons set forth in the specification, as well as the amendments and arguments presented by the Applicant.

Claim 22 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 over U.S. Patent No. 2,832,612 to Coutts (Coutts).

Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

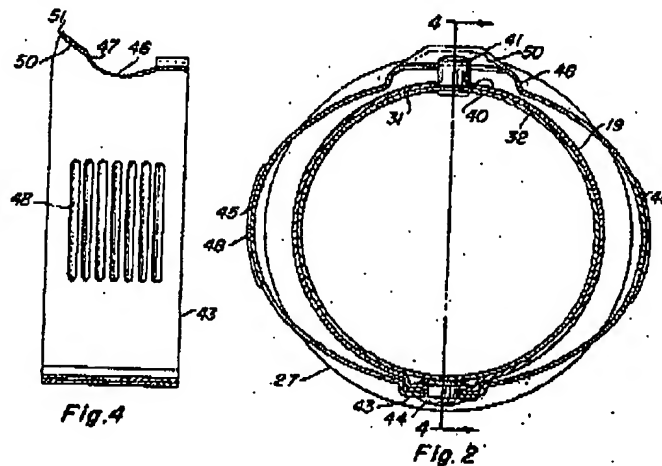
Independent claim 22 recites, in part, a locking member having a tab, where the locking member is disposed "around the outside of said housing between said pair of retaining rims so that said tab is normally biased through said opening into the second part (emphasis added)".

Applicant respectfully submits that Coutts fails to disclose or suggest locking member having a tab that is normally biased through an opening into the second part as required by claim 22.

Coutts discloses an oval spring band 43 that has an opening 46 defined by a peripheral wall 47. In order to separate the tubes the operator applies pressure to the spring band 43 at the points 48-48 to compress the spring along its major axis which causes the cam surface 50 to be raised above the pin 41 whereby the latter may be

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removed from the defining edge 47 of the opening 46 and beyond the slot 40 to uncouple the tubes so that they may be separated. See col. 2, lines 20-60. For purposes of clarity, Figures 2 and 4 of Coutts are reproduced below.



Thus, Coutts discloses that pin 41 remains stationary, while the oval spring band 43 has an opening 40 that is normally biased to receive the pin. The spring band 43 can be compressed so that the cam surface 50 is raised above the pin.

The Office Action asserts that cam surface 50 of Coutts discloses the "tab" of claim 22. However, Applicant submits that cam surface 50 is clearly not normally biased through an opening into the second part as required by claim 22.

Accordingly, claim 22 is not disclosed or suggested by Coutts. Claim 22 is therefore in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection to claim 22 are respectfully requested.

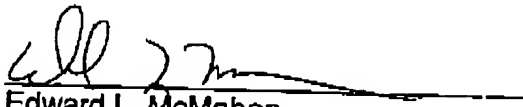
In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for issuance. Such action is solicited.

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If for any reason the Examiner feels that consultation with Applicant's attorney would be helpful in the advancement of the prosecution, the Examiner is invited to call the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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